

Wild Times

A Free Publication of the Wyoming Game & Fish Department

Spring 2009

THE HABITAT CONNECTION

Wow, what a Wyoming winter! Habitats across Wyoming are covered in snow and ice and will slowly be turning to green over the next few months of spring. Animals that hi-

bernate will wake up hungry and be in search of food after the long winter's nap. Others will start to migrate, or move, back to the habitats where they will spend their spring and summers.

Don't forget to watch for migratory birds returning to Wyoming this spring!



Spring is an important time for all of Wyoming's wildlife. The forage, or food, that herbivores eat starts to grow. An herbivore is an animal that eats vegetation. Pronghorn antelope, moose, deer and elk are herbivores, just to name a few. *Can you think of other animals that are herbivores?*



Carnivores, or meat-eaters, are ready for spring, too. They spend many long hours in the winter searching for food. Some well-known carnivores are mountain lions, mink and red fox. *Can you think of other carnivores that live in your area? What do they eat?*



What is an omnivore? An omnivore is an animal that eats either plants or animals. So it is a combination of a carnivore and an herbivore. A bear is an example of an omnivore. Black bears eat meat, but did you know they eat mostly berries and nuts and other vegetation like twigs, leaves and plant roots. They also like insects they find living under rocks or in tree bark. *What are some other omnivores?*



FIELD Wildlife Journal

JOHN LUND

West Casper Game Warden

It is Warden Lund's job to make sure people are respecting wildlife and following the laws. It is an important job to protect the wildlife. "Most people are law-abiding citizens and I really enjoy working with them," says Warden Lund. "But my job is to do wildlife law enforcement, and I take that seriously."

Warden Lund was first interested in becoming a game warden when he was a kid. He loved hunting and wildlife and was out in the field when he was checked by a game warden.

"I can remember thinking that being a game warden would be a cool job, and I was right."

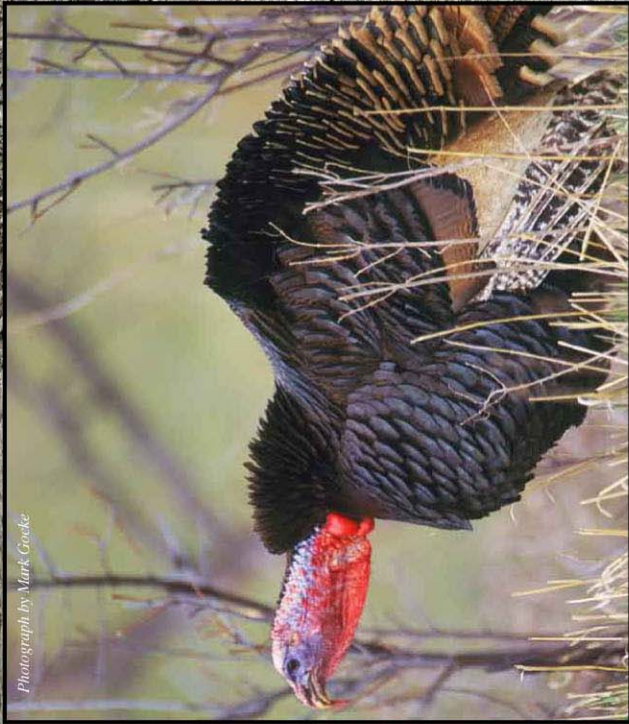
"My job has allowed me to work many places around the state of Wyoming. My favorite cases involve the investigation of illegal wildlife kills where people intentionally violate wildlife laws," says Warden Lund. "There are people who make mistakes, and there are people who know what they are about to do is wrong." One recent case, Warden Lund caught a guy who killed two elk in the wrong area and tried to cover it up. But thanks to the warden's investigation and forensics,

they were able to catch the man and charge him for what he did. "I also like my job because of the variety of things we do," Warden Lund says. I get to work with hunters, fisherman, help with boating safety as well as educating the public on various wildlife issues. But most of all, I get to be outside with Wyoming's wildlife."

Don't forget to say hello to Warden Lund if you see him in the field. He might be talking with fisherman, hunters or landowners, or even you.



WILDLIFE PROFILES



WILDLIFE PROFILES

Osprey

- Size:** Averages about two feet in length with a five- to six-foot wingspan.
- Eats:** Mainly fish, but also snakes, frogs, and small rodents.
- Lives:** In areas close to large areas of water. In Wyoming they are found mostly near Yellowstone and Jackson Hole.

Ospreys are also called fish hawks. That is because they eat fish. Ospreys are great at fishing. They soar 20 to 100 feet above the water until they see a fish near the surface of the water. They then swoop in with their talons, or claws on their feet, and grab the fish. Ospreys even go under the water! Can you imagine the splash this must make? When they surface with a fish and begin to fly away, they make sure to put the head of the fish pointing into the wind so they can fly more easily.

Wild Turkey

- Size:** 36 to 49 inches.
- Eats:** Nuts, acorns and seed from the ground, but also grains, insects, frogs and lizards.
- Lives:** In open forests and forest edges.

Wyoming has two kinds of turkeys; Merriam's and Rio Grande. They live in different habitats. Did you know turkeys have a wingspan of up to six feet? They are good fliers, but usually don't fly during the day unless they are alarmed. In the evening they fly into a big tree, most often a ponderosa pine, to roost or spend the night. The next day they fly back down to the ground again in search of food. Even though turkeys roost in a tree, they nest on the ground. They make their nests out of leaves and grasses.

Mink

- Size:** Weighs one to three pounds and measures around 19 to 28 inches long, not including its tail.
- Eats:** Lots of animals including frogs, crayfish, beetles, fish, ducks, songbirds, and muskrats.
- Lives:** In marshes and thick grass, bushes and logs along the banks of streams.

Mink are fierce predators that can kill and eat all kinds of animals. They can even kill animals that are bigger than they are, like a muskrat or even a duck! Mink are good swimmers and can even chase down their prey when they are in the water. They are quick and strong when they are searching for food along the water's banks as well. Mink live in dens that another animal has made. The dens are usually close to a river or pond bank.

Fox squirrel

- Size:** Around 17 to 28 inches long with a tail anywhere from seven to 13 inches.
- Eats:** Nuts, seeds, and other parts but plants, but also insects, bird eggs, and even young birds.
- Lives:** In eastern Wyoming from the cities to the plains.

Fox squirrels are tree squirrels that live in eastern Wyoming. They get their name because their bushy tails look like fox tails. These tails help them travel through the trees safely by helping them balance. Fox squirrels have two litters of young each year. They build their nests, which can be seen in trees, with twigs and leaves. When a squirrel starts to chatter, it is actually an alarm to all the other squirrels that danger is near. Listen for the chatter next time you are near a squirrel. Does it think you are dangerous?

Our Wildlife Heritage

Native Americans once used wild turkeys for a lot of things. Mainly they depended upon turkeys for a food source. But Native Americans also used them as a source of clothing, weapons and decoration. Early settlers from Europe relied on turkeys, too. But, in Wyoming, wild turkey are not native. That means turkeys were brought into Wyoming, but they weren't originally here. Turkeys were first brought to the Laramie Peak area outside of Wheatland. People then moved some of these turkeys to the Black Hills area around Newcastle in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Now we have turkeys all around the state. *Have you seen them where you live?*

WHAT IF THERE WERE NO GOBBLE?

Did you know that in the 1930s, wild turkeys were close to extinction? Extinction is when all the animals of one kind die. But people worked hard to help the wild turkey make a comeback. Turkeys were restocked around the country, and their numbers grew. We now have lots of turkeys and even two kinds in Wyoming – the Rio Grande and Merriam's! We have these two species, or types, of wild turkeys, because they live in different habitats.

Around Wyoming

Oh Deer!

Migration takes place in Wyoming in the spring. Migration is the wildlife moving from one area to another. The areas that wildlife move between are often from places they live in the winter to places they will live in the summer. This can be very dangerous for wildlife. They have to cross roads, highways and mountain ranges just to name a few of the obstacles. But in southwestern Wyoming, some deer are getting a break.



Mule deer migrate to and from the Wyoming Range by crossing a major highway, U.S. Highway 30, in an area known as Nugget Canyon. Can you find Nugget Canyon on a map? Recently there were six underpasses built under the highway between Sage Junction and Kemmerer. Underpasses allow wildlife to pass under the highway instead of crossing it.



One of the main concerns is that mule deer won't use the underpasses, but recent pictures taken by a motion-activated Web camera show that some animals are using it! Green River Wildlife biologists think that these underpasses will save 200 to 300 mule deer a year! It will also help motorists by reducing the danger of hitting a deer.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is working with many people on this project, including the Wyoming Department of Transportation and Western Ecosystems Technology. The Wyoming Game and Fish has been working for 20 years to reduce deer and vehicle collisions during migrations in Nugget Canyon, and now with everyone's help, we are making a difference.



Outdoor Classroom

Signs, Signs, Everywhere There Are Signs...

You might be surprised at how many wild animals are around, even in town. We don't see them often because many come out only at night. But they leave

signs,
if we
know
what to
look for.

Dens and
burrows, dams
across streams,
claw marks or
chewed bark on
trees, tracks,
droppings,

**STOP
LOOK!**

Animals leave signs,
if we know what
to look for.

hair – all are signs of mammals. This spring, take a look for tracks in a field. You might find some in mud. You might find a tiny trail left by a mouse, or even bigger prints of a rabbit or squirrel. Maybe you will even see the footprints of a fox or coyote.



Sage Grouse tracks and feathers.



Look and You Might See:
Wolf Tracks in the Mud,



*Muskrat Homes, or Beaver Trails
going down to the water!*



WYOMING'S WILDLIFE *Worth the Watching*

Wildlife can be fun to watch. You should always make sure you aren't getting too close and interfering with the normal lives of the wildlife. A good way to practice wildlife watching is by trying to find some fox squirrels. Fox squirrels live in many Wyoming towns. These beautiful animals are used to being around people and are easy to watch. Find a squirrel

and study how it jumps from branch to branch. Watch how it buries a nut in the grass, or how it chatters and taunts when it senses danger. Some squirrels can do a tight-

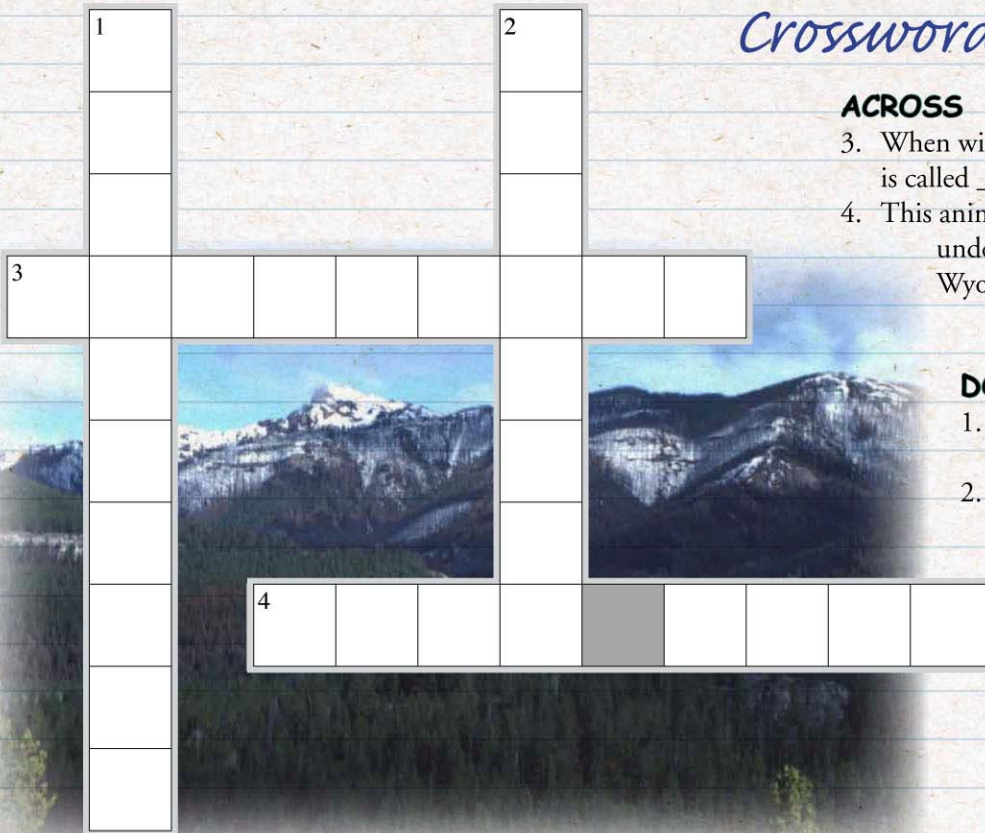


rope walk on electric power lines, high above the street. Why do you think the squirrel has a long, bushy tail? Can you think of different things a squirrel might use its tail for? Write down as many as you can think of!



► TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ◀

Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

3. When wildlife move from one area to another it is called _____.
4. This animal has been using underpasses to pass underneath the highway in southwestern Wyoming.

DOWN

1. When all the animals of one kind die it is called _____.
2. An animal that eats both plants and meat is an _____.



3. Migration 4. Mule Deer

ACROSS

1. Extinction 2. Omnivore

DOWN

~QUIZ~

Carnivore, Herbivore or Omnivore?



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